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ORIGINAL POETRY.

THE EXCURSION ;

MOT IN SIX CANTOS, NOR BY WALTER
SCOTT.

CANTO FIRST

The Outset.

I.

HIGH o'er the top of Terragh-drain,*
Bright blazed the lamp of day,
And mountain brow, and fertile plain,
And lowing herd, and lab'ring swain,
Rejoiced beneath its ray :
No murky cloud of dismal hue,
Obscured the heavens delightful blue,
And all was lovely to the eye,
And scarce was felt the morning breeze,
As low it murmured through the trees,
And peaceful was the sky.

II.

'Two horsemen down from Mullagh-hash,
Their nimble coursers goad,
O'er ramparts leap, thro' torrents splash,
And thund'ring on they come slap-dash,
Until they gain the road.
The foremost rider slacks his pace,
And round and rosy is his face,
His eye with quick and rapid roll
In pleasure seems to dance,
And all the ardour of his soul
High sparkles in the glance :
If care's dark gloom e'er tinged his brow,
'Tis gone, and all is sunshine now.
Proudly his courser he bestrode,
That seemed delighted with the load,
And toss'd his head and flowing mane.
And who is he the horseman gay,
That seems as blithe as morn of May ?
'Tis B——'s bard, 'tis young ——.

III.

Tall his companion seems and bold,
Robust as cast in giant mould,
And firm in saddle is his seat,
And ready for each active feat,
And fit for deeds of chivalry ;
He never flinch'd when boozing came,
Nor turn'd his back on smiling dame,
Nor shrunk midst roar and revelry.

* The places mentioned in the poem,
are in the neighbourhood in which the
scene is laid.

Much did O'Niall, jovial soul !
Delight to drain the foaming bowl,
He loved the social circle's smile,
He loved the heart devoid of guile,
And much he loved to raise the song,
And wake to joy the jolly throng.

IV.

Why is the minstrel now so gay,
And why this pomp and proud array ?
He goes with Ruarg's Earl to dine,
To gobble beef and guzzle wine ;
He knows he'll meet Alditha's kiss,
He smacks his lips, and thinks of bliss.
Now on they go with headlong speed,
And seems to fly each foaming steed,
Nor stop at house nor hall ;
Loud grunt the maimed downriden hogs,
And yelp the limping trampled dogs,
And frighten'd matrons squall.
They dashed down Comber's rugged steep,
That frowns o'er Faughan's current deep ;
Glenlough's affrighted domes they pass'd,
And Ruarg's towers appear at last.

CANTO SECOND.

The Reception.

I.

What form is that divinely fair
That trips with light fantastic air,
And joy wild sparkles in her eyes,
Soon as the Minstrel's pliz she spies ?
Quick as an arrow from the bow,
He from his courser sprung,
One moment gloated on her charms,
Then claspt Alditha in his arms,
And gave her such a loving hug,
And kist her round from lug to lug—
She wisely held her tongue !

II.

They entered Ruarg's stately hall,
'Twas hurry, haste, and bustle all,
For on that day the princely lord
Ask'd friends and neighbours to his board.
Boots't not to sing in uncouth rhyme,
In sooth 'twere only waste of time,
How lambs were slaughter'd, wethers kill'd,
And harmless chickens' blood was spill'd ;
How hams of pigs, and bullock's rumps,
The table graced in glorious lumps ;
How sauces rich their fumes dispense,
Which please, when palate is the sense.

III.

The chaplain swiftly muttered grace,
And eager now was every face,
Loud rattled knife and fork,
And every guest in every place,
Seem'd anxious for the work :
With various food each cramm'd his maw,
And fix'd on every dish his claw,
And gulp'd down wine and beer ;
And to Lord Ruarg said and swore,
Who courteously still prest the more,
They never eat so much before,
Nor tasted better cheer.

IV.

Now clattering knives had ceas'd their jar,
Amid the wassail rout,
And clatt'ring tongues are heard afar,
And louder grows the noisy war,
As goblets wheel about.
The minstrel there amid the crowd,
Join'd in the song and roar'd aloud ;
Loose hung his robes with bard-like air,
His vest unlaced, his bosom bare,
His ruby cheek made pale the rose,
And sweat-drops trickled o'er his nose,
While from his wildly rolling eye,
Pot-yeen's strong spirit sparkled high,
The genial stream had fired his blood,
And thus he sung in phrensied mood.

THE MINSTREL'S SONG*.

" Here neither cares nor grief annoy,
Come then the present hour enjoy,
And on ye god-like souls,
Drink to the truly patriot band,
Who made the firm intrepid stand,
For stills and flowing bowls :
Who roar'd with wide undaunted throats,
And fearless gave their manly votes,
For general distillation ;
Who forward in their country's cause,
Repealed cursed prohibition's laws
And saved our sinking nation ;
Brim, heroes, brim the potent glass,
For thus our days and nights shall pass,
In mirth, and joy, and jollity ;
Broach, broach the keg, the bottles sink,
Leave frigid souls to mope and think
On all this world's frivolity.

" Joy to his soul whose watchful eye,
Did first his country's woes descry,
And found the only remedy ;

* This song, and the description of the minstrel, appeared a considerable time ago in the Belfast News-letter, written by the same author.

High may his cellars still be stor'd,
And sparkling flagons grace his board,
Of mirth-inspiring usquebaugh :
But on, for time is o'er us stealing,
Toss high your goblets to the ceiling,
'Tis glorious sure thus to be reeling,
'Midst rout, and roar, and revelry ;
Huzza ! hark, hark, the thundering crash,
Chairs, jugs, and tumblers all to smash,
On heroes on, on, on, slap-dash,
And shout for very devilry."

The dome re-echoed with applause,
The bard was crown'd, but whiskey won
the cause,

CANTO THIRD.

The Wrestling.

I.

Where is the man with drink so dead,
With bumpers whizzing in his head,
But likes to talk and laugh ;
And as he drains the potent glass,
And gaily toasts his favourite lass,
He cares not how the moments pass,
But calls the man a downright ass
Who will not freely quaff :
And while the spirit rocks his brain,
When to his head it mounts,
He loudly roars his noisy strain,
Or of his tippling prowess vain,
Some drinking bout recounts.

II.

Round Ruarg's board each clam'rous tongue
Was loud in gabbling, or in song,
And peals of laughter shook the hall,
And all was balderdash and brawl,
'Till up rose Ruarg's heir,
And looking round with conscious pride,
To feats of wrestling he defied
The stoutest toper there.
O'Niall soon was on his stumps,—
The minstrel feared twould end in thumps,
And oft he begs and prays,
That now they would not sally out,
Or folks would call it drunken rout—
They mind not what he says.

III.

The night is clear, the lawn is dry,
And hurry scurry out they hie,
The ring is formed, the wrestlers stand
With foot to foot, and hand to hand,
Let who will fall, no spleen or grudge—
The minstrel stands appointed judge.
The signal given, they onward rush,

And tug with might and main,
And pant, and blow, and trip, and push,
And shake the very plain.
O'Niall fumed in dudgeon deep,
To find his foe his footing keep;
At once collecting all his might,
He gave him such a grasp so tight,
That down he fell with thund'ring crash,
Three ribs were broken all to smash.

IV.

They raise up Ruarg's vanquished heir,
And to the hall again repair,
The minstrel rais'd the victor's song,
The croud the chorus deep prolong,
The foemen meet as friends;
And quicker still the glass goes round,
And louder yet the walls resound,
And noise and nonsense more abound,
Till some lie sprawling on the ground,
And others snore in sleep profound,
And thus the wassail ends.

CANTO FOURTH.

The Return.

I.

The minstrel can no longer wait,
His courser prances at the gate,
He drank to Ruarg's Earl adieu;
O'Niall too must likewise go,
Each clapt his hand on saddle-bow,
Sprung to his seat with active throw,
And off like lightning flew.
They spur each steed to full career,
And plunge through Dennet's flood;
No stay they make, they feel no fear,
Through deep morass and desert drear
They drive in furious mood.

II.

Thro' Donnemanagh's streets they hie,
And past the parsonage they fly,
And down the steep and up the scaur,
The clattering hoofs are heard afar,
And glancing swift by Killaugh-lhu,
Banagher's hills appear in view;
And now O'Niall's dome they near,
Who prest the bard to taste his cheer,
And rest till dawn of day;
The bard he only waved adieu,
Then crack'd his whip, and off he flew,
Tho' lonely was the way.

II.

He knew that Belmount's loving dame,
His long delay would chide,
And bite her nails, and fret and fume,
And pace in agony her room,
Till seated by his side.
And who is he whose thund'ring rap
Startles the musing fair?
"The bard's arrived"—she sets her cap,
And curls her wig with care.
Then forth she comes with native grace,
And smiles bedeck her hideous face,
And from her hollow haggard eye,
That fain would glow with amorous fire,
And strives to languish and desire,
Cadaverous glances fly—
The minstrel with averted look,
Her proffered with'ered hand then took,
But in a sulky mood,
Scarce to her questions deigns reply,
Scarce deigns to meet her anxious eye,
As smirking there she stood.

IV.

At length he said, with powerful yawn,
'Tis near, I think, the morning dawn,
I'm somewhat weary with my ride,
O'er rugged path and mountain-side,
And long for soft repose;
Then rush'd impetuous to his bed,
And down he laid his drowsy head,
And nought of bardship could you spy,
In's gloomy brow and clos'd up eye,
But listen with attentive ear,
And still the minstrel's art you'll hear,
In th' music of his nose.

SONG.

AIR.—"My lodging is on the cold ground."

I.

WHEN nature in darkness and sorrow
appears,
Nor a smile o'er her face seems to play,
The sun comes to dry his fond worship-
per's tears,
And to bless her with gladness and day!
Thus amid life's career by affliction ob-
scur'd,
Where enjoyment is scarce seen to bloom;
Oh! a true friend's the sunbeam so fondly
ador'd,
And so sweetly dispelling the gloom!